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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Well, I’ll have to assume that if you’re reading this column this week, you were not "raptured" last weekend - and your small part of the world is still here. So much for another one of those "End of the World" predictions!

Granted, there have been a LOT of natural disasters lately, if they can be called "natural"! Earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, tornadoes, floods, and the like. But to link these disasters to the end of the world is more or less opportunistic rather than evidence of such a finality. And to me, it seems like just another scam to lure these evangelical rip-off artists to convince their followers to donate all of their worldly goods to these "organizations". Now what, since the end didn’t come? What will these lemmings give up now in support of the next predicted end?

But forgive me, I don’t mean to make light of the disasters that have been occurring lately to make a point! One simply cannot imagine the likes of what the people of Joplin, Missouri and other parts of the country are going through right now. Even seeing scenes of the devastation on the television can’t possibly give one a true sense of what occurred in Joplin and other parts of the country. It’s beyond belief. One victim, being interviewed in a news report, was asked what she and her family were going to do now. The woman, almost in a daze, simply replied "the devastation is so complete. Where do we even start?"

And now we have the opportunity to "look forward" to another hurricane season which starts in June! Simply amazing.

On a lighter note, the unofficial beginning of summer starts this weekend, as the Memorial Day holiday weekend has begun. I’ll be working most of the weekend, but I do plan to do my share of grilling and putting down a few "cold ones" over the weekend! At least the weather will finally cooperate for a spell, after a few weeks of cold and wet weather. It’s about time.

Since Joe isn’t here this week, I’ll relay his usual advice for these types of holidays - please behave responsibly. If you’re going to drink, do not drive. The lives you save could be ours! Enjoy the long weekend!

Until next time...

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->In This Week’s Gaming Sections! - Maintenance, New Attacks Disrupt Sony Network
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   PSN’s Identity Theft Protection Offer!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Maintenance, New Attacks Disrupt Sony Networks

Up, down ... up, down. Sony’s networks, which have been slowly coming back online, had account management shut down Tuesday as a result of system maintenance. And there are reports of new break-ins at Sony online properties in Greece and Japan.

The scheduled maintenance was to last until about 5 p.m. Pacific time. The company said that, during this time, "registration and account management will be inaccessible, including the password-reset process." It added that some users "may experience difficulty signing in" to the PlayStation Network, but the majority would be able to play online and sign in to external sites that require PSN authentication.

Sony is requiring users to reset their passwords after weeks of outages for its networks. At first, the surge of users doing so brought the network to its virtual knees, and then the company had to deal with an apparent security vulnerability relating to password resetting.

That security hole enabled anyone with the date of birth and e-mail address of the account holder to reset the password. Birth dates and e-mail addresses of up to a hundred million users were among the unencrypted data that Sony believes may have been taken during the initial outage beginning April 20.

After the ID breach, the company was criticized by industry observers and some members of Congress for not quickly revealing that users’ personal data might have been taken. The initial breach was noticed by Sony on April 19, the PlayStation Network was shut down on April 20, and users were notified of the data breach and possible loss of personal information on April 26.

Sony executive Kazuo Hirai recently said "aggressive actions" are being taken to address the vulnerabilities that led to the unprecedented outage. The actions, he said, include advanced security technology, increased levels of encryption, additional firewalls, and early warning systems.

But some Sony watchers have recently contended that the company’s networks did not use the most recent versions of key software before the initial break-ins.

Hackers who may have been involved in the original break-in posted server logs that indicate the company used version 4.4 of OpenSSH, instead of the most recent 5.7. Additionally, Sony apparently used an older version of Apache server software.

The company also announced, contrary to reports throughout the past week, that its PlayStation Store would not go back online Tuesday. It said it is targeting restoration of the store by the end of this month.

On Sunday, there were reports that the Sony BMG site in Greece had been attacked. An anonymous hacker posted online a database of usernames, real names, and passwords that were allegedly from users on the site.

On Monday, the hacker group Lulz Security is believed to have obtained user databases from Sony's music site in Japan. The hackers reportedly left a message chiding Sony for its lack of security and unprotected databases.

Meanwhile, a phishing attack that targeted an Italian credit-card company was discovered to have been based on servers for Sony's Thailand site.

Identity Theft Protection Offer for PlayStation Network and Qriocity Customers

Sony Computer Entertainment and Sony Network Entertainment have made arrangements with Debix to offer AllClear ID PLUS to eligible PlayStation Network and Qriocity account holders in the United States who are concerned about identity theft.

AllClear ID PLUS is a premium identity protection service that uses advanced technology to deliver alerts to help protect you from identity theft. The service also provides identity theft insurance coverage and hands-on help from expert fraud investigators.

Sony has arranged, at no charge to eligible PlayStation Network and Qriocity account holders, for twelve months of this service to be provided by Debix to those who choose to enroll. In order to be eligible, account holders must be residents of the United States with active accounts as of April 20, 2011.

If interested, please submit your email address by June 28, 2011, at 11:59:59 PM CST at: us.playstation.com/news/consumeralerts/identity-theft-protection.

Please note, you must enter the same email address used to register your PlayStation Network or Qriocity account. Once your email address is validated, you will be sent your AllClear ID PLUS activation code.

Sincerely,

Sony Computer Entertainment & Sony Network Entertainment

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Internet Rules at Center of ’e-G8’ Forum in Paris

France wants better regulation of the Internet. Google’s executive chairman says policymakers should tread lightly and avoid "stupid" rules.

Bridging such differences about how the Internet could or should be more regulated took center stage Tuesday at an "e-G8" meeting aimed to parlay the digital world’s growing economic clout into a cohesive message for world leaders at the Group of Eight summit later this week in Normandy.

The two-day Paris gathering has brought together Internet and media world gurus such as Google Inc. executive chairman Eric Schmidt, News Corp. Chairman and CEO Rupert Murdoch and Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg. And the discussion includes issues such as protecting children from "evil stuff" on line, preventing illegal downloading of copyrighted materials and shielding Facebook users from unsolicited invitations.

The e-G8 comes amid concerns in the industry that some countries - including several in Europe such as France - have taken measures or enacted laws that could curb Internet freedoms.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, kicking off the conference, said governments need to lay down and enforce rules in the digital world even as they need to foster creativity and economic growth with the Internet.

It’s unclear whether he’ll win over digital executives with this argument, or whether the G-8 summit - which doesn’t include countries such as China, a major source of online activity and online regulation - will agree on a single policy going forward.

Sarkozy said he faced mistrust over his push for the "e-G8" when Japan’s earthquake, fiscal troubles in Europe, and the Arab world revolutions are likely to dominate the G-8 summit in Deauville on Thursday and Friday. Conflicting visions about the Internet - notably about how regulated it should be - has pitted companies such as Amazon.com and Google against governments about how to protect privacy and copyrights online.

"We need to hear your aspirations, your needs," Sarkozy told hundreds of business executives, creative minds and journalists at Tuileries Gardens in Paris. "You need to hear our limits, our red lines."

Policymakers such as Sarkozy say the blistering pace of growth has often left regulators behind. He said a "balance" needed to be struck to prevent misuse of the Internet - such as to protect children online - while boosting its potential as a driver for economic growth.

While praising the executives, he said regulatory curbs are needed.

"Don’t let the revolution that you’ve begun threaten everyone’s basic

right to a private life and full autonomy," said Sarkozy. "Full transparency ... sooner or later runs into the very principle of individual freedom."

Google's Schmidt said technological changes have led to a "shift in power" toward individuals - whether to illegally release secret documents or transfer copyrighted material, or rally against their repressive regimes.

"My own opinion is that most governments are having trouble with that shift in power," he said. "So rather than sort of complaining about it, which is what everybody does, why don't we see if we can harness it?"

During an e-G8 panel talk, Schmidt said: "You want to tread lightly on regulating brand new, innovative industries. ... Clearly you need some level of regulation for the evil stuff. But I would be careful about overregulating the Internet.

"I cannot imagine any delegate in this conference (who) would want Internet growth to be significantly slowed by a government that slows it down because of some stupid rule that they put in place," he said.

Last week, the U.N.'s independent expert on freedom of speech said governments that curtail users' access to the Internet are violating a basic human right - regardless of the justification.

Britain last year joined France by announcing it would cut off Internet access to people who illegally download copyright-protected material. The French government has so far issued only warnings under the "three strikes" formula for possible penalties.

Privacy concerns have also raised hackles in Europe.

In January, Facebook and German officials reached a deal over unsolicited invitations sent to nonmembers of the social networking site through its "Friend Finder" feature - which allows Facebook to send email invitations to potential users through current members' address books.

The feature came under fire in Germany for violating privacy laws by allowing unauthorized access to information of third parties. The agreement allows Facebook members more control over the email addresses they share.

Johannes Caspar, a data protection official in Hamburg who negotiated the deal for the Germans, said American laws under which Facebook operates tend to be more laissez-faire than those of Europe about privacy issues.

He said Facebook has cooperated with German investigations about possible privacy law violations, and the onus now is on Europe "to make things clearer" about the rules companies face on the continent.

Sarkozy's Web Initiative Faces Reality Check

French President Nicolas Sarkozy softened his usually tough stance on Internet regulation at a forum that brought together tech titans in

Paris, but stark divisions remained on everything from privacy to copyright.

Sarkozy, who is notorious among techies for creating a law that calls for copyright pirates to be cut off from the Internet, lauded the gathering of executives that included Google Inc's Eric Schmidt and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg for helping fuel the Arab spring and spurring economic growth.

But he maintained that governments have a role in setting ground rules to limit the abuses and excesses of the Internet, setting up a clash with Schmidt, who said no one would win if "some stupid rule" stunted the growth of the Web.

As speakers paraded on a stage built in the Tuileries Gardens of central Paris, deep rifts between policymakers and Internet executives became apparent, with few signs of how they would be resolved in the two-day forum.

A draft communique reviewed by Reuters, which is being finalized for release at the conclusion of the forum, suggests that the gathering will paper over the deepest divisions and shy away from making concrete policy proposals.

The draft will urge G8 leaders to adopt an international approach to protecting users' personal data but will sidestep the fraught issue of intellectual property by leaving it largely under the purview of national governments.

Copyright has proven one of the most divisive issues at the forum. Executives from big music and publishing groups have argued for more protection of their works, while Internet executives and activists criticize anti-piracy measures, such as France's anti-piracy law, as crimping the Web's essential open nature.

Yochi Benkler, a Harvard University professor known for championing open source ideas, said governments must be careful about unintended consequences of strict copyright rules.

"You can make the Internet safe for Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga, or you can make it safe for the next Skype," said Benkler, referring to two pop music stars and the wildly successful start-up Internet telephony service. "You have to choose."

The draft communique tries to split the difference.

"With regard to the protection of intellectual property ... we recognize the need to have national laws and frameworks for improved enforcement, while encouraging the development of online trade in goods and content which are respectful of intellectual property," it says.

The question of how to protect users from losing control of their personal data or being tracked by companies for profit was also the source of division at the forum.

Cultural differences between the U.S. and Europe were deep, with Europeans less willing to give up their privacy in exchange for the benefits of new services like Facebook and more willing to turn to regulation than their American counterparts.

Privacy issues are moving center stage after the high-profile hack of Sony Corp's PlayStation network and amid a regulatory review in Europe, which could lead to stricter requirements on Internet companies, such as registering their databases and notifying users of data breaches.

The draft communique doesn't propose any solutions. "We encourage the development of common approaches taking into account national legal frameworks, based on fundamental rights and that protect personal data, whilst allowing the legitimate transfer of data," it says.

A delegation of Internet executives are set to travel to the G8 meeting in French seaside resort of Deauville later this week to present the forum's findings to the heads of state.

Maurice Levy, chief executive of advertising firm Publicis, which is hosting the conference, said the group didn't have to resolve the many debates over the Internet's future.

"The final document need not be a consensual document," he said. "It may present contradictions. It could present disagreements."

Microsoft Latest Security Risk: "Cookiejacking"

A computer security researcher has found a flaw in Microsoft Corp's widely used Internet Explorer browser that he said could let hackers steal credentials to access FaceBook, Twitter and other websites.

He calls the technique "cookiejacking."

"Any website. Any cookie. Limit is just your imagination," said Rosario Valotta, an independent Internet security researcher based in Italy.

Hackers can exploit the flaw to access a data file stored inside the browser known as a "cookie," which holds the login name and password to a web account, Valotta said via email

Once a hacker has that cookie, he or she can use it to access the same site, said Valotta, who calls the technique "cookiejacking."

The vulnerability affects all versions of Internet Explorer, including IE 9, on every version of the Windows operating system.

To exploit the flaw, the hacker must persuade the victim to drag and drop an object across the PC's screen before the cookie can be hijacked.

That sounds like a difficult task, but Valotta said he was able to do it fairly easily. He built a puzzle that he put up on Facebook in which users are challenged to "undress" a photo of an attractive woman.

"I published this game online on FaceBook and in less than three days, more than 80 cookies were sent to my server," he said. "And I've only got 150 friends."

Microsoft said there is little risk a hacker could succeed in a real-world cookiejacking scam.

"Given the level of required user interaction, this issue is not one we

consider high risk," said Microsoft spokesman Jerry Bryant.

"In order to possibly be impacted a user must visit a malicious website, be convinced to click and drag items around the page and the attacker would need to target a cookie from the website that the user was already logged into," Bryant said.

Driver's Data May Be Used To Check Workers' Status

The Obama administration is about to add more personal information to E-Verify, an immigration enforcement tool that is vulnerable to fake, stolen or borrowed documents.

The administration has said that it will add driver's license data from the state of Mississippi to E-Verify as early as June 8. The agency will test whether using the data can help E-Verify better identify people working illegally in the U.S. E-Verify checks workers' information against Social Security and immigration records. E-Verify was not designed to check whether a document with valid information belongs to the person who presented it.

Citizenship and Immigration Services, part of the Department of Homeland Security, has tried to make up for E-Verify's shortcomings by adding photos from U.S. passports, green cards given to legal permanent residents and work permits. But those only cover some workers.

About 80 percent of workers present driver's licenses to establish their identity when filling out paperwork at new jobs, including papers - known as I-9 forms_ asking whether they are citizens or permitted to work in the U.S., said Bill Wright, a spokesman for Citizenship and Immigration Services, which oversees E-Verify.

"This initiative is a major step forward in allowing (Citizenship and Immigration Services) to more effectively combat identity theft and protect against fraud in the employment verification process," Wright said. Only data such as birth dates and driver's license numbers will be shared by Mississippi, not photos.

Other states will be watching the Mississippi experiment to see how it affects Americans' privacy. No other states have agreed to share data yet, although some others were asked.

Citizenship and Immigration Services proposed using the driver's license data in a May 9 Federal Register notice. The public can comment on the proposal through June 8.

The addition of driver's license data raises concerns with the American Civil Liberties Union, which has been a leading opponent of E-Verify, created in 1996 but little used until after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"You are creating an enormous database filled with information on what would be, if it's mandatory, information on every American worker. That's a honey pot for identity thieves," said Chris Calabrese, an attorney with the ACLU in Washington.

He noted a recent Minnesota case in which names, birth dates, Social

Security numbers and other information were not kept secure by a company the state hired to check employers' new workers through E-Verify.

The Federal Trade Commission announced earlier this month it had reached a settlement with Lookout Services Inc., the Minnesota contractor, on charges of failing to safeguard the sensitive information. The FTC said because of the lax security, an employee of one of Lookout's customers was able to get access to sensitive information in the company's database, including Social Security numbers of about 37,000 people. Lookout did not admit wrongdoing.

Jon Kalahar, a spokesman for Mississippi's Department of Public Safety, said employers won't have access to information they don't already have. They will punch in driver's license numbers and other information to the E-Verify online site and the site will access the Mississippi driver's license information and confirm whether there is a match. Kalahar said Citizenship and Immigration Services assured his agency that the license information will be kept safe during the six month experiment.

The use of E-Verify could figure prominently in any immigration debate in Congress this session.

Republican Rep. Lamar Smith, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, cheered a Supreme Court ruling on Thursday sustaining Arizona's state law requiring businesses to use E-Verify. The 2007 law was signed by then-Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, now the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Mississippi law requires employers in that state to use E-Verify.

Smith said he would soon introduce a bill expanding E-Verify and making its use mandatory for businesses. Many companies have been expecting the change in law to come in this session of Congress and have been meeting with Smith and his staff to discuss their concerns. E-Verify will help "turn off the jobs magnet that encourages illegal immigration," Smith said Thursday.

The Obama administration has made cracking down on employers who hire noncitizens without work permits a key part of its immigration enforcement policy.

More than 200,000 of the estimated 7 million employers in the U.S are using E-Verify. Most use it voluntarily, although federal contractors and some businesses are required to do so.

China 'Setting Up Military Cyber-Warfare Team'

China's military has set up an elite Internet security task force tasked with fending off cyberattacks, state media reported on Friday, denying that the initiative is intended to create a "hacker army".

The People's Liberation Army has reportedly invested tens of millions of yuan (millions of dollars) in the project - which is sure to ring alarm bells around the world among governments and businesses wary of Beijing's intentions.

"Cyber attacks have become an international problem affecting both civilian and military areas," the Global Times quoted China's defence

ministry spokesman Geng Yansheng as telling a rare briefing this week.

"China is relatively weak in cyber-security and has often been targeted. This temporary programme is aimed at improving our defences against such attacks."

The 30-member "Cyber Blue Team" - the core of the PLA's cyber force - has been organised under the Guangdong military command in the country's south, and will carry out "cyber-warfare drills", the newspaper said.

The United States, Australia, Germany and other Western nations have long alleged that hackers inside China are carrying out a wide-range of cyberattacks on government and corporate computer systems worldwide.

But in a commentary, the Global Times hit out at "some foreign media" for interpreting the programme as a breeding ground for a "hacker army".

"China's capability is often exaggerated. Without substantiated evidence, it is often depicted by overseas media as the culprit for cyberattacks on the US and Europe," the paper said.

"China needs to develop its strong cyber defence strength. Otherwise, it would remain at the mercy of others."

China's military has received annual double-digit increases in its budget over much of the last two decades as it tries to develop a more modern force capable of winning increasingly high-tech wars.

In 2007, the Pentagon raised concerns about a successful Chinese ballistic missile test strike on a satellite, a weapon that could be used to knock out the high-tech communications of its enemies.

US computer firm McAfee said in February that hackers from China have also infiltrated the computer networks of global oil companies, stealing financial documents on bidding plans and other confidential information.

According to US diplomatic cables obtained and published by WikiLeaks, the United States believes that China's leadership has directed hacking campaigns against US Internet giant Google and Western governments.

In one cable, the US embassy in Beijing said it learned from "a Chinese contact" that the Politburo had led years of hacking into computers of the United States, its allies and Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

Is Windows 8 Coming Out in 2012 or Not?

Microsoft on Monday night backtracked on statements from Steve Ballmer about the release of its next operating system.

"It appears there was a misstatement," a Microsoft spokeswoman said in a statement. "We are eagerly awaiting the next generation of Windows 7 hardware that will be available in the coming fiscal year. To date, we have yet to formally announce any timing or naming for the next version of Windows."

Microsoft's statement comes after Ballmer appeared at a Microsoft

Developer Forum in Tokyo on Monday and said the "next generation of Windows systems ... will come out next year."

"As we progress through the year, you ought to expect to hear a lot about Windows 8. Windows 8 slates, tablets, PCs, a variety of different form factors," Ballmer said.

While we might hear a lot about Windows 8 this year, it's now unclear if we'll be able to purchase Windows 8-based systems in 2012. Windows 7 made its debut in October 2009, almost three years after Vista launched in January 2007. If Microsoft sticks to a similar release cycle, that could put the Windows 8 release in late 2012, but Redmond apparently isn't prepared to make any formal statements just yet.

A variety of rumors regarding Windows 8 have popped up on the Internet in recent months, but Microsoft has yet to confirm any particular features it will add to the OS. While Ballmer didn't go into detail about what Windows 8 users will see, he did outline several areas into which Microsoft is committed to investing, including the natural user interface, natural language, HTML and JavaScript, and the cloud.

Expect to hear more about the future of Windows at the "D: All Things Digital" conference next week in California. All Things D recently confirmed that Microsoft's Windows president, Steven Sinofsky, will appear at the conference, which runs from May 31 to June 2. PCMag will be there, so stay tuned.

Microsoft is also hosting a Windows Phone event today in New York, during which it is expected to provide more details on the next Windows Phone 7 update, codenamed Mango. PCMag is also there and will have all the details.

German Scientists Beat Data Transfer Record

Computer users who despair over slow Internet connections should take heart - German scientists have broken a speed record, sending data contained on 700 DVDs over a single laser beam, in one second.

The scientists at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) Monday said they had broken the world record by sending data at a speed of 26 terabits per second.

The data, sent over 50 kilometers (31 miles) on a single laser beam, was coded thanks to a system known as orthogonal frequency-division multiplexing (OFDM) in which the laser beam is divided into separate colour streams.

"With 26 terabits per second, you can simultaneously transmit up to 400 million telephone calls per second," said Professor Juerg Leuthold of the institute in a statement.

NYC Judge Allows Lawsuit Against Huffington Post

A judge on Tuesday refused to throw out a lawsuit by two Democratic political

consultants who allege that The Huffington Post’s founders stole the idea for the online news website from them.

Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Ramos denied a motion by lawyers for the media company to dismiss the lawsuit, meaning that the case will now likely move to the discovery phase of fact-finding by both sides.

Consultants Peter Daou and James Boyce sued in November 2010, alleging they had originally come up with the plan for the site’s blend of blogs by prominent contributors, news aggregation and original content.

Daou and Boyce said they discussed their plans with Huffington Post co-founders Arianna Huffington and Kenneth Lerer in 2004, and believed they were partners. The two consultants claimed they were cut out of the deal after the co-founders raised millions of dollars to launch and develop the site. They seek unspecified damages.

When the lawsuit was filed, Huffington and Lerer said in a statement that the claims were "pure fantasy."

AOL Inc. purchased The Huffington Post for $315 million in February.

On Tuesday, AOL Huffington Post Media Group spokesman Mario Ruiz said in statement that although the judge did not throw out the plaintiffs’ claims as they had requested, "we remain confident that we will prevail in proving that the lawsuit has no merit."

An attorney for the plaintiffs, Partha P. Chattoraj, said the defense team was grateful for the opportunity to make its case to the judge.

"We look forward to proceeding with discovery, as the court ordered," he said.

Majority of Kids Would Rather Lose Their Sense of Smell Than Lose Facebook

Do you value your Facebook profile? Do you value it enough that you’d give up one of your senses to secure access to the site? A new study reveals that 53 percent of young people (ages 16-22) would rather sacrifice their sense of smell than give up their social networks.

McCann Worldgroup polled 7,000 people between the ages of 16 and 30 in the U.S., the U.K., Spain, China, Brazil, India, Mexico, and several other countries to find that without technology, a majority of this group would feel isolated and out of the loop.

"Technology is the great global unifier," global IQ director for McCann Worldgroup Laura Simpson said. "It is the glue that binds this generation together and fuels the motivations that define them. Young people utilize technology as a kind of supersense which connects them to infinite knowledge, friends, and entertainment opportunities."

The study also found that youth care more about connections than experiences. This generation maintains friendships differently than their parents, too. Through social media, the average teenager is "likely to manage and maintain multiple, intersecting groups of friends," as opposed to a single, smaller core group. In fact, 47

percent of respondents want others to remember them for their connections.

"This is the ’strategic generation’ who effortlessly manages different identities, evaluates the usefulness of specific connections, and occasionally strips back those who no longer make the grade," the survey said.

With 500 million profiles and counting, the Facebook army is vast, and McCann’s research suggests that a significant sector of the population cares deeply about their activity on the site. Fortunately, most of them will never have to chose between their olfactory system and Facebook.

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